

The Temple of Thúmis, Sage of the Gods

-An overview of Tsolyáni temples.

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Knowledge of Thúmis, Lord of Wisdom, Knower of Arts, Hidden Seeker of Eternal Knowledge, Sage of the Gods, may well date from before the advent of the Golden Age. Worship of a being with this name is recorded upon a stone lintel from the period of the Dragon Lords. Yet it was the crippled priest, Pavár of Gánga, who developed a means of contacting the great enigmatic interdimensional beings who act as "gods" for the humans of Tékel. Pavár compiled a book of mysteries (now lost) and coordinated the doctrines still followed in all of the human empires. Thúmis seems to have been one of Pavár's principal sources of information about the laws of science and magic which operate in this dimension.

There is a fragment purported to be in Pavár's own handwriting preserved in the Temple of Eternal Knowing in Béy Su which reads: "This Lord is cool and detached, clear and open to the intellect, full of knowledge and quick to reply... When one is in contact with Thúmis, it is as though one were being viewed by a Mighty Eye, as a man views the antics of the Drí [a tiny ant-like creature: Translator], sympathetic in a wise and unemotional way, all knowing and aware of present and past, yet somehow concerned for Man..."

The Golden Age ended with the subsidence of the entire region around Gánga. The mighty city of Éngsvan hlá Gánga sank beneath the sea, and with it sank most of Pavár's knowledge and that of his successors. Much more was lost during the ensuing interregnum. Men who had some access to ancient secrets began to style themselves "wizards" and "sorcerers" and to oppress the land. The worship of Thúmis had always been popular in the northern reaches of the Dó Cháka Protectorate, however, and bits of knowledge were preserved at Chéne Hó and Páya Gupá. With the coming of the Second Imperium, the organized worship of the Gods and Cohorts began again throughout the human lands of Tékel, and temples to Thúmis were erected in Béy Su, Jakálla, Jaikalór, and other great centers. The priesthoods gathered together what books and documents had survived the cataclysm and began to piece together the doctrines of Pavár once more. Contact was again achieved with Thúmis and with others of these "deities", but this contact was much less complete than the method developed by Pavár and now lost. Still, it provided mankind with some insight into the laws of magic and science and man's relationship to the cosmos. [Unfortunately, however, either these beings are unaware of Tékel's original dimension or are unwilling to tell their human worshippers about it; in all of the many centuries of contact with the "gods" not one of them has given any indication of knowing how Tékel came to be in its present "pocket

dimension", how to get back to mankind's original dimension, or even that such a dimension exists. It is probable that this is beyond the limitations of these "deities".]

With knowledge and the establishment of an organized religion, came doctrine, and with doctrine came dispute. Various references to the "Mighty Eye" of Thúmis in the writings of Pavár and his colleagues led to the doctrine that Thúmis "possesses the Eye to View the World"; i.e. omniscience and omnipresence. As all who have seen a temple of Thúmis know, the image of an eye is worked into the hem of the robe of this god, and his priests wear this symbol upon their breast-plaques. Dispute arose over the nature of this "viewing". Some say that the Eye of Thúmis is not a physical eye at all but rather an inherent presence of Thúmis (a "viewing") in every particle of being. Others claim that Thúmis does indeed possess physical eyes, but these are not manifest in this world but rather view it from his own dimension. A third party takes the mention of "eyes" quite literally and theorizes that Thúmis has physical eyes which can manifest themselves at his will in this world. This sect points to the many miraculous appearances of "the Eyes of Thúmis" throughout history. They point to the eye-like impressions which magically appeared upon a bare cliff face overlooking the site of the Battle of Chéne Hó in 2,019 A.S., to an eye-shaped stain upon a woman's shawl now held as a sacred relic in the Temple of the Eye of Thúmis in Páya Gupá, and to many other such "miracles". These three doctrines -- the "Imminence of the Eye", the "Transcendentalism of the Eye", and the "Phenomenal Manifestation of the Eye" -- have split the priesthood of Thúmis since before the beginning of the Second Imperium, and this dispute continues to the present day. At times this has led to rioting and violence. More often it has cropped up as quiet intrigue, preferential treatment for one's own sect members, and discrimination against members of the other two sects. The current High Princeps, Gámalu hiBeshyéne, has attempted to extirpate this ancient discord by commanding all of his priesthood to busy themselves in the codification of mankind's accumulated knowledge into a series of great encyclopedias. This project began well but has faltered somewhat since long-held rivalries and hatreds cannot be so easily discarded. Assisted by a young Cardinal, one Chiréne Nemanándu, the current High Princeps continues to persist in his attempt to unify the temple, but the weight of centuries bears heavy against them.

There are several other doctrines of the priesthood of Thúmis which may be mentioned. Some of these are almost as thorny as those described above, while others are shared by all of the sect. Firstly, there is the "Emanation of the Supernal Light": this holds that all wisdom (and indeed knowledge of your own being) has Thúmis as its source, and emanates outward from him like the radiance of the sun. Those who have "gone nigh unto the god" and "opened their intellects to his light" are able to gain knowledge more easily and quickly than those who have "shadowed" themselves with mundane matters. There is a strong strain of mysticism in this doctrine, and within the Temple of Eternal Knowing at Béy Su there are several adepts who accept pupils for training and who demand that real knowledge requires the renunciation of the material world. Again, this doctrine becomes embroiled in the controversy over imminence, transcendentalism, and physical manifestation. One group of the "illuminated" as they call themselves, dwells in a craggy monastery in the Dó Cháka foothills and faces the sun from dawn until dark,

believing that this is the visible source of Thúmis "Light". Most of these adepts are totally blind. Others hold assemblies in which they sway and chant and pray for a manifestation of Thúmis "Light" upon the "eye of the brain". Others of less mystical bent believe that Thúmis will reveal himself only through knowledge, and they thus spend their lives studying and concentrating upon every intellectual and philosophical problem they can devise. The extremes of this group can be seen at Mrelú, where the priesthood of Thúmis offers free board and lodging to any who can provide any item of knowledge not already recorded in their books -- but if a visitor fails to add something to their store of learning, they charge him exorbitantly, often resulting in their imprisonment of a luckless traveler as a debtor!

One of the most prevalent doctrines -- and one about which there is no dispute-- is the "Perpetration of Sagacity"; the employment of knowledge for societally useful purposes in this world. Thúmis is the patron of teachers, scribes, mathematicians, physicians, and all those who work with their minds to serve their fellow man. In Jakállá there is the Hall of the Extended Hand, where physicians endeavor to cure diseases and wounds; in Báy Su there is the Dome of Interacting Numerals, where scholar priests aid engineers, architects, and others with mathematical problems; in the Monastery of the Sapiient Eye in the foothills of Dó Cháka [hex 4105] there is the Gallery of Gazing Forth by Night which houses the best astronomers and astrologers of the Imperium; and in Thráya the House of Laying Out the Lands collects information from merchants and travelers in order to complete a geography of known areas of Téकुमेल.

In "Empire of the Petal Throne", the image of Thúmis is described as a seated, scholarly man with a golden halo, a book in one hand and the traditional Staff of Power of the old Bednálljan kings in the other. While this is the most prevalent depiction of Thúmis, Tsolyáni iconography is really much more complex. Mythologically, Thúmis is the scribe of the Gods and this is often shown as a seated, cross-legged scribe, a roll of parchment open upon his knees, bareheaded or wearing a simple black skullcap. He is also a frequently occurring character in various mythological epics; e.g., in the Epic of Hrógga, Thúmis appears first to Hrógga (the major Tsolyáni culture-hero) as a serious-appearing man of middle age, who warns him of the Snares of Hehekáino. Later he occurs as a haloed, dazzlingly golden manlike figure with hands which consists of many rays of light; here he bestows the Orb of Eternal Light upon Hrógga. Again he is seen as a two-legged bejeweled serpent who protects Hrógga from the demon Qu'ú, again as a many-faced, many-armed anthropomorphic being who shields Hrógga during the battle on Dórmoron Plain with the minions of Missúm, Lord of Death, a form of Sarkú; and once again he appears as a great eye from which rays stream forth when Hrógga calls upon him in the Ebon Pyramid. All of these forms are considered by Tsolyáni theologians to be equally valid and identifiable aspects of Thúmis, who can appear at will in many such shapes. There are some forty-seven "usual" manifestations of this type, and iconographers include about another score of "rare" or "unattested" forms. Those interested in this topic may consult "Kháriyelyal hiHáyasa" (Appearances of Mighty Glory) by Cha'ánya hiNáshomai in the library of the Temple of Eternal Knowing in Báy Su.

For those who have never visited Tsolyánu, it may be of interest to describe the physical structure of a temple. Although styles differ from period to period, region to region, and deity to deity, certain basic features remain the same. Wherever space permits, the Tsolyáni build their temples upon high, flat-topped pyramids of masonry or brick. These great structures have two functions; to raise the temple above the heat and dust of the surrounding city and also to create a feeling of awe in their worshippers. The temple proper is then constructed upon this platform, and ramps or staircases lead up to its surface from the street below. At the head of these stairs the worshipper first comes to a closed porch or colonnade, where temple guards and low-level duty priests are posted to assist the worshippers and to protect the temple premises. Within, a hall or pillared antechamber leads into a great central hall, often of several stories height. Here the worshipper finds a great image of the deity, and here the public rituals are performed. Side halls and further colonnades lead off to smaller shrines of some of the particular "aspects" worshipped in this temple, and there are usually gates barring the way to an inner shrine which can be visited only by persons of status. In some temples sweeping staircases lead up to a higher level where this inner shrine is situated. At the back of the main hall and of the smaller shrines there are staircases within the wall-thicknesses which lead up to priests' quarters on the upper floors. Living quarters are frequently built as side buildings on the pyramidal platforms as well. Important assets, such as great libraries, astrological observatories, museum-like Halls of Wisdom Made Manifest, temple schools, etc., are also constructed on the pyramid-top to the side of back of the central temple. The pyramid itself often contains rooms and passages which lead to private shrines, cult rooms, storerooms and guardrooms, and eventually down to the ancient levels of the city underworld. Since the Tsolyáni often pull down the superstructure of a temple and enclose it within a bigger and grander pyramid, building a new shrine on top of the new construction, many of the older shrines are buried under many layers of previous temple buildings. These are carefully preserved and maintained as secret inner shrines accessible only to the higher initiates.

If there is room in the city surrounding the temple, there will often be an outer compound, where further guard rooms, priestly quarters, administrative chambers for the recording and keeping of temple titles and land grants, cook rooms, storerooms, etc., are to be found. One important feature of the Tsolyáni temple is usually built in these outer compounds too: the Túnkul tower. This strongly buttressed edifice contains the temple's great cylindrical gong, the Túnkul, which is rung to announce the holding of ceremonies within. Each temple has its own Túnkul, and the notes of these are recognized by the people of the city and are used to tell the time, much as church bells and great clocks such as Big Ben in London are utilized in this world. Some of these Túnkul are huge, needing a score of priests swinging a great padded beam slung from ropes to strike them. If the city is too crowded to allow room for these outbuildings, as at Khirgár, the Túnkul tower is built open at one corner of the pyramidal central structure.

Each temple has its own roster of daily rituals and these differ from city to city, even within the same sect. Usually, however, the priesthood of Thúmis celebrates the rising of the sun at dawn, a great midday ceremony, another at sunset, and yet another about three

hours later. Some add particular rituals at the rising and setting of Tékumel's two moons, Káshi and Gayél. In Báy Su there are more; there the rituals are in order, "The Opening of the Eyes of Radiance" at dawn, the "Purification of the Intellect" at midday, the "Following of the God" at about three o'clock, the "Purifying of the Lips of Thúmis" at sunset, and the "Rising unto the Planets" about two hours later, and the "Visitations of the Night" at about two o'clock in the morning. These involve the presence of all priests and priestesses resident in the temple, much chanting from the "Korúnkoi hiHengándàlisa" (the Book of Mighty Splendour). Thúmis accepts no human sacrifices, and thus the only presentations made to the god are baskets of fruit, flowers and -- from richer patrons -- eye-shaped memorial objects made of gold, gems, and other precious substances. These last are inscribed with the donor's name and a request for intercession from the god.

Individual services are also possible upon payment to the priests. The poor may obtain prayer-scrolls from the hordes of scribes who sit in the outer courtyards, or who line the outer entrance halls and colonnades. Wealthier persons can enter at almost any time of day (the gates of the temple are usually shut at night, except for a tiny postern), and a payment of a few Kaítars will be sufficient to arrange for the personal mention of one's name and presence to the deity. The side shrines and other public worship areas can be visited and will also require small donations. Those proceeding to the inner shrine will be expected to pay more, of course, and the ceremonies there are correspondingly magnificent. Participation in the inner mysteries, held in the older shrines beneath the upper temple, is possible only for the most devout and the most well-to-do. Even the most ancient and secret shrines and ceremonies are open only to high ranking priests and worshippers of the highest clan status and Imperial position.

The organization of the priesthood is far more complex than was given in "Empire of the Petal Throne". On "real" Tékumel, almost all of the twenty major priesthoods of Tsolyánu are divided into three types of specialists: ritual priests, administrative priests, and scholar priests. Those whose deities favor military matters also have units comprised of military priests. A fifth variety, the lay priests, consists of men who are devoted to the deity (and usually to scholarship, magic and the practice of medicine, etc.) but who are not technically within the hierarchy. For purposes of the game, all of the first three varieties were lumped together as "priests," players interested in a combination of military action and religion could either be "priests" (using weapons as maces, etc.), and the lay priests were termed "magic users."

Actual practice is as follows: (1) the ritual priests are those concerned with temple observances, as their name implies. After once passing beyond the stage of acolyte and first-level priest (in "real" Tékumel the term is "first circle," but "level" fitted just as well), a ritual priest is assigned to a temple where he/she learns the basic observances, studies the books of sacraments and ceremonies, and progresses through many, many intermediate levels to become a temple's chief ritual priest. Beyond this stage, the levels are partially ritualistic and partially connected with internal temple administration; one can progress to the levels of High Priest, Grand High Priest, and finally Temple Preceptor. (2) After becoming a first-level priest and after assignment to a specific

temple, an administrative priest is given tasks involving the recording of tithes, the keeping of records, maintenance of vital statistics for the residents of his/her area, collecting and accounting of land taxes, produce, donations, etc., etc., and many other such clerical tasks. Most temples own large tracts of land, worked by peasants, tenant farmers, renters, etc., and all these things must be kept in order. Temple buildings, payments to craftsmen for decorations, repairs, new accouterments, robes and symbols, etc., etc., are also to be recorded, and the network of priestly administration has to be maintained and overseen out into the smallest villages. If an administrative priest shows promise, he/she can be promoted to head of a local temple bureau, then to temple administrative commandant, then to commandant of a small city temple complex, then to a larger city or fief, then to overlordship of a district, then to the governor of a major city and its suburbs, then to regional or provincial commandant, and finally to the High Council of the temple. At this level, the High Preceptor of the ritual priests also becomes a member of the High Council. (3) Scholar priests again pass through their acolyteship and are assigned to a temple. They continue their studies in the temple's schools and go on to major study in a major city, where they are promoted to the rank of scholar, then to senior scholar, then to ranking scholar, then to licentiate, then to proctor of scholars, then to High Scholar -- and these last are also members of the High Council.

Temples which have military units within their hierarchies (as opposed to the patronage or financial support of a non-temple Imperial legion) hire low level soldiers directly from their adherents among the peasantry and urban residents. Some temples, such as the Temple of Vimúhla, insist that all temple soldiery undergo training as acolytes, first level priesthood, and then a special indoctrination as military priests before they can become Soldiers of the Flame. These recruits are quickly separated into those who will be fighters and field officers, versus those who will go on into military administration. The latter progresses much as regular Imperial soldiery; through a sort of basic training in officership, to captain, major, colonel, force commander, general, and high general (the terms are all rough equivalents of the Tsolyáni terminology and do not mean exactly what they imply in English). High Generals are again members of the High Council of the temple.

Lay priests are generally quite unstructured. These scholars usually have occupations other than those of regular priests, and their main connection with their temple is simply of religious membership. In "real" Tékelmel such lay priests are often itinerant physicians, makers of spells and potions for the poor, scribes and teachers with a bent towards religious study but who are unwilling to undergo the rigors of temple hierarchy membership, etc. Some of these lay priests do go on, of course, to become great scholars in their own right, and they are then recognized by their temple as great wizards and are included, if they wish, in the High Council of the temple.

The High Council is supervised in most temples by senior priests, termed "patriarchs," and these in turn select two or three of their number to serve as a governing council. One of these then acts as Grand Adept for the temple as a whole and reports directly to the Petal Throne in Avanthár. A few temples have an intermediate level between their

governing council and the Grand Adept: a small body of Lord Adepts, who act as the advisors to the Grand Adept.

Education in Tsolyánu is obtained primarily through temple schools; those of the "good" alignment attend the schools provided by the priesthood of Thúmis and his cohort, Keténgku; those of the so-called "evil" persuasion are schooled by the priesthods of Ksárul and Grugánu. Other temples maintain smaller specialized educational institutions where their particular doctrines are imparted. Those who wish to learn the profession or skill of their clan do not attend a temple school but rather a specialized clan school; these teach the fundamentals of reading and simple mathematics and then go on directly to impart their clan occupation to the apprentice. When a particularly bright boy or girl is found, however, his/her clan may provide support to keep the child at one of the temple schools. These offer courses in the basics of literacy and mathematics, plus theology, calligraphy, the recitation of epics, music, divine ritual, languages, history, poetry and versification, etc. Further training is then provided for those who would remain in the priesthood, while less priestly-inclined students return to their clans, apply for posts within Imperial bureaucracy, etc. Peasants and low-level townspeople are largely illiterate and enjoy none of these benefits, of course. No census has ever been issued, but one might estimate a literacy rate of only fifteen or twenty percent in the Empire. Most military units recruit directly from the peasantry and also from the townspeople. More literate and intelligent youths are then trained by the Legion for officership, while the remainder serves out a contracted term as simple soldiery.

Education, thus, is the prerogative of those who can find support, either from their clan or from the personal fortunes of their parents and families. Slaves are not normally educated, although the great households maintain training for slave clerks, scribes and such specialized skills as singing, dancing, poetry, art, etc. The scions of the great nobility are often educated partially by these slave tutors and partially at one of the more prestigious temple schools. Any free citizen of Tsolyánu may enroll as a priest or priestess and undergo whatever education and training he/she can afford. Once accepted into the hierarchy as a priest/priestess, the young student need no longer be supported by a clan, parent, or other patron but rather receives support from the temple.

The priesthood of the temple of Thúmis is thus a complex institutionalized structure. Both males and females may serve in the hierarchy, and unlike many religious groups in this world's history, priests and priestesses may marry -- within their own clans, usually, but also occasionally one another. Depending on their parents' desires, the children of such unions can be made members of the parents' clan to learn a skill or profession, or they may be brought quite young into the temple school and educated for the priesthood. As has been stated elsewhere, the Tsolyáni do not share sexual restrictions of many cultures of this world, and there is considerable mixing between boy and girl students at the temple schools. This is not frowned upon unless it interferes with the student's educational development. The only deity who does not favor "co-education" thus, is Dilinála, the cohort of Avánthe, who accepts only females into her sect.

Players who wish to be priests/priestesses in the game "Empire of the Petal Throne" are allowed to assume they are already part of the Tsolyáni hierarchy. In fact, however, foreigners entering the Imperium for the first time may spend a year or two finding their way about this complex culture before deciding to enter one of the priesthoods. They are then allowed to enter the temple schools, where they must support themselves until they are approved as first level priests/priestesses. They are then given the usual training and allowed to serve as their interests and skills permit. It is true that the deities of Tsolyánu have their counterparts in some other empires -- Mu'ugalavyá, Yán Kór, and to some extent Salarvyá (Livyánu's shadow deities are another matter) -- although attributes and forms may differ considerably. A young Salarvyáni follower of Shiringgáyi, their principal goddess, might choose to follow Avánthe, her nearest Tsolyáni counterpart, but this is not absolutely necessary -- he might perceive closer affinities with Hnálla, Thúmis, Karakán, one of the cohorts -- or even with one of the "evil" deities, since Shiringgáyi embodies several of those attributes as well. In "real" Tékel, stray castaways from the great southern continent across the Deeps of Chanayága are very rare. Their religious predilections seem to fit in with one or another of the Tsolyáni deities, however, and several such foreigners are now recognized priests, scholars, etc., within the Tsolyáni hierarchies. Again, this seems to be a matter of personal conscience and desire.

Nonhumans are another problem. The Ahoggyá, Hláka, Pygmy Folk, and Tinalíya would not in "real" Tékel ever give allegiance to one of the human gods; their own deities are quite different and almost unintelligible to humankind. The Páchi Léi, Pé Chói, and the Swamp Folk, on the other hand, tend to ape their human neighbors and accept the human deities as their own while they are in the lands of men. They claim that these same deities are manifested to them in much the same way as they appear to humans; the names and attributes are different, of course. The Shén accept human deities indifferently while journeying in human territories, but they always revert to the worship of their own two great deities when they return home. One of these, the One of Eggs, is apparently roughly equivalent to the human "good" alignment taken all together, while the other, the One Who Rends, is an amalgam of the evil deities. The inimical races -- Hlutrgú, Hluss, Shunned Ones, and the Ssú -- stand completely outside the human system. There is no question of alignment for them; they are always hostile and make no alliances with human "good" or "evil." Their gods, whatever they may be, are totally opposed to the whole human pantheon, whether it be by Hru'u or Hnálla.

There is also the question of priestly duties for players in "Empire of the Petal Throne." Often a group of players will enter a new city and simply walk up to their temple and ask for food and lodgings. They are then surprised when they are asked for papers from their former city assigning them to this new post. In "real" Tékel, of course, a priest or priestess would quickly be given regular tasks within the hierarchy and would be expected to serve there until given an assignment elsewhere. Free choice does not much enter into it. If a member of the priesthood is assigned a post, he or she is expected to go there and perform accordingly; upon this performance he/she will receive further promotions -- or demotions. In order to facilitate adventuring in the game, however, priests in my own campaigns usually find some leniency -- an understanding duty priest

who is willing to report that this person has now arrived here and wishes to be enrolled this temple. This is done for a consideration, of course. Priest and priestesses who travel upon temple business are housed in guest quarters in the outer temple compound (if there is one -- otherwise in such guest quarters as the temple may possess inside). If they then enter into the local hierarchy, their permanent lodgings and food are arranged. There are of course special leaves of absence; e.g., to take care of family or clan business, to perform special missions, and even to take care of personal business concerns (priests are not forbidden to engage in trade, providing that it does not interfere with temple duties). A Tsolyáni duty priest would be nonplused to find a stranger strolling into his temple saying, "Hi, I'm so-and-so, just in from Jakállá -- can you fix me up with a bed and some dinner?" In order to simulate more of "Tékumel reality," a referee should assign each "priest" or "priestess" regular duties and see that these are carried out. Travel should be with permission of the temple authorities and should be hopefully result in some good for the temple. Missions to another city should specify objectives and time to be spent there. Leaves of absence can and should be provided, but within limits. Unauthorized absences and derelictions of duty should be disciplined -- even to expulsion from the priesthood. This is how it would really be...

Another question frequently asked is whether or not one will find temples to these same deities in other lands? Can one travel to Ssa'átis and be assured of finding a temple of Thúmis there ready to assist? The answer varies from place to place: in Mu'ugalavyá one finds temples to the local equivalents of all the Tsolyáni gods, plus the peculiar cult god of the Mu'ugalavyáni, Hrsh. In Yán Kór similarly one will encounter much the same deities under new guises, although there are several smaller sects and local cults. Little Pijéna worships their strange "She Who Is Not Seen," perhaps a form of Avánthe, or perhaps an aspect of Dlamélish -- strangers are not permitted to view their rituals. Ghatón, Milumanayá, Sa'á Allaqí -- all share modifications of the Tsolyáni religious system, descended from the same ancient faith, that of Éngsvan hlá Gánga. The Salarvyáni hold their form of Avánthe, Shiringgáyi, in especial reverence, although small temples to some of the other deities also exist there. In far-off Livyánu the overlordship belongs to Qaame'él, Lord of Shadows, and the other gods of that priest-ridden land are equally mysterious and secretive. Whether these deities are really the same interdimensional beings as the "gods" of Tsolyánu, or whether they are simply creations of their human worshippers -- or whether they are interdimensional beings different from the familiar twenty of the Imperium -- these are questions known only to the gods themselves. It is clear that the Livyáni are mighty sorcerers and are indeed in contact with some interdimensional force, but whether Qaame'él or the Horned One of Secrets of the city of Laigás are the "same" as the gods of Tsolyánu is as yet unresolved by scholars and theologians. Referees of "Empire of the Petal Throne" may wish to simplify the matter by allowing all nations of Tékumel to have the same deities, or they may wish to make them different. In reality the matter is quite complex and has not been resolved by the scholars of Tékumel themselves.

It may be noted that even within the Imperium there are centers and strongholds of each deity. The farther west one goes, the more one finds the worship of Vimúhla

predominating -- so much so that Mu'ugalavyá may be said to be his territory in spite of the presence of the ancient cult-god Hrsh. Vimúhla is also strong in Fasíltum. Sárku is very strong in the north, particularly around the City of Sárku [hex 4115]. Hnálla and Karakán are powerful in Béy Su and Avanthár. Thúmis, as said above, predominates in Dó Cháka, has a large following in Béy Su, and is also worshipped in Sokátis. Ksárul is in ascendancy in Mrelú and to some extent in Púrdimal... And so on.

Another frequently asked question concerns the existence of religious feast days and holidays. Thúmis is honored on the twenty-fifth of the month of Dohála in Túmíssa, when his Festival of Light and Wisdom is celebrated. The same pageant is celebrated on the same day in Sokátis, and the two cities vie with one another in the pomp and splendor of their rituals and feasting. During the five intercalary days inserted at the end of the Tsolyáni year many festivals are celebrated in various cities: on the first of these days the festival of the "Web of Wisdom" is celebrated by the sect of Thúmis at Mrelú, and on the fifth day Páya Gupá holds the "Visitation of the Eye." These are the primary festivals devoted to this deity, although smaller ones are held almost every month during the year in some city or other. The general form of these great holiday celebrations consists of the distribution of free food and drink at the temples of the god, rich pageants and processions from one temple to another (e.g. Thúmis' image ceremonially "visits" the temple of Hnálla during the Festival of Light of Wisdom), lengthy ceremonies and offerings, visits by Imperial officials and persons of status to the temples, feasts, dancing, and mimes. All of the temples have such special ceremonies and holidays, which members of other sects may attend or not as they choose.

A final doctrinal point may be mentioned here. Every temple has within it those who may be classified as "conservatives," those who follow the "middle of the road," and those who advocate some type of reform or radical change. The temple of Thúmis is no exception to this common human characteristic, and within the temple hierarchy there are those who staunchly follow the old ways and the laws of the ancestors exactly as they were laid down. Their objective is the continuance of the status quo -- if anything, a return to values they somehow perceive to be slipping away. These are most likely followers of the Phenomenal Manifestation of the Eye doctrine. Those in the middle are often simply the time-servers, those who go along with their daily cares and perceive no great need to alter society one way or another. The "radicals" are more important: those in the temple of Thúmis have established an inner, secret society called the Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom, made up of largely of younger priests and priestesses, particularly those educated in the temple school at Béy Su. Another center of this group is Sokátis. This group believes that true wisdom must be made to triumph, and those who follow anti-societal doctrines (i.e., the followers of "evil" deities) must be brought around to perceive the error of their faiths and the Truth of Light. This group has been much suppressed by the senior priests, who fear that such tendencies may bring about violence and a breach of the centuries-old Concordat (the treaty between all of the twenty Tsolyáni sects not to engage in inter-sect violence, assassination, and warfare). This, say the conservatives, would plunge the nation into civil war and would open the door to the Yán Koryáni, the Salarvyáni, etc. The Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom states that it wants

no such violence (contrary to the pressures from certain other secret societies within others of the temples of the "good" gods, who advocate almost a holy war); they say that instead they wish to establish the schools of Thúmis on a broader basis and educate more Tsolyáni children the doctrines of wisdom; they desire to expand their practice of medicine and science and thus entice more of the common folk to join the temple of Thúmis (to the detriment of the other temples, of course); and they argue that only through a concerted campaign to indoctrinate, to obtain high posts, to favor adherents of Thúmis and the "good" gods, etc., will they be able to bring about an end to the ancient worship of the "evil" ones. In these plans they are joined by the Pure Light Society of the temple of Hnálla, and by certain other secret societies in various priesthoods of the cohorts. They are opposed not only by counterpart groups in many of the "evil" priesthoods, but also by the Girdle of Purity Society of the temple of Avánthe and the Clan of the Sword of Righteousness of the temple of Karakán, which wish to take stronger measures to extirpate the worship of "evil" gods. The results of this struggle are not clear, but it is obvious that one of their first goals is the removal of the present High Princeps, Gámalu hiBeshyéne, whom they perceive to be essentially a conservative.

A word or two about some of the current personalities within the temple of Thúmis may be of interest. The High Princeps, Gámalu hiBeshyéne, was born at Pétris on the island of Gánga in 2,319 A.S. He was raised as a minor noble's son, studied astronomy and navigation, and served for some time as a merchant sea captain, an occupation not uncommon for the sea-faring folk of the southern isles. He first came to Jakálla in 2,344 A.S. and somehow became involved with the temple of Thúmis. He then led several expeditions of a mercantile nature to places as far away as Tsoléi. Upon his return to Tsolyánu, he devoted himself to the priesthood of Thúmis and received rapid promotions. Eventually this led to his appointment as High Princeps, with the fief of Páya Gupá being given to him for personal revenue. He has since attempted several reforms, one of which is the compilation of the great encyclopedias mentioned previously. He has also attempted to establish a military presence for the sect of Thúmis, who had previously not been known to be a "military-minded" deity: he is patron and current high general of the Legion of the Lord of Wisdom, 22nd Imperial Heavy Infantry, based at Páya Gupá. He now has mustered some four cohorts and has two others in training. He hopes to increase these troops to their maximum of twenty cohorts within a year or two, but the short supply of good recruits around Páya Gupá -- and also the lack of available training and equipment there, due to great military demands being currently made upon all of Tsolyánu by its military leaders -- have slowed his efforts. Rivals within the temple of Thúmis have also done all they can to frustrate his plans, believing that Thúmis has no business fielding a military force! Such matters, they say, should be left to the violent gods.

Lord Kashónu hiSsaívra, of the ancient Green Bough Clan, was born at Jakálla and is now about forty-seven years of age. He is the chief advocate of the doctrine of the Phenomenal Manifestation of the Eye, and is a great proponent of conservatism and the status quo. He is currently senior high priest of the temple in Jakálla. Lord Kashónu is a man of many pleasures, somewhat rotund and known as a good companion at a feast. He

is close friends with Prince Esélné, the Emperor's son, and his contacts include most of the high nobility of the Empire. Lord Kashónu is a dangerous man when crossed, however, and it is rumored that he will use his influence to topple the current High Princeps if he can. He believes that the temple of Thúmis should emphasize the physical manifestations of Thúmis in the rituals more and should engage in a long-range building program to house the sacred relics of Thúmis in more grandiose fashion. Pageants and celebrations are dear to him, and he is an inveterate quoter of the sacred scriptures.

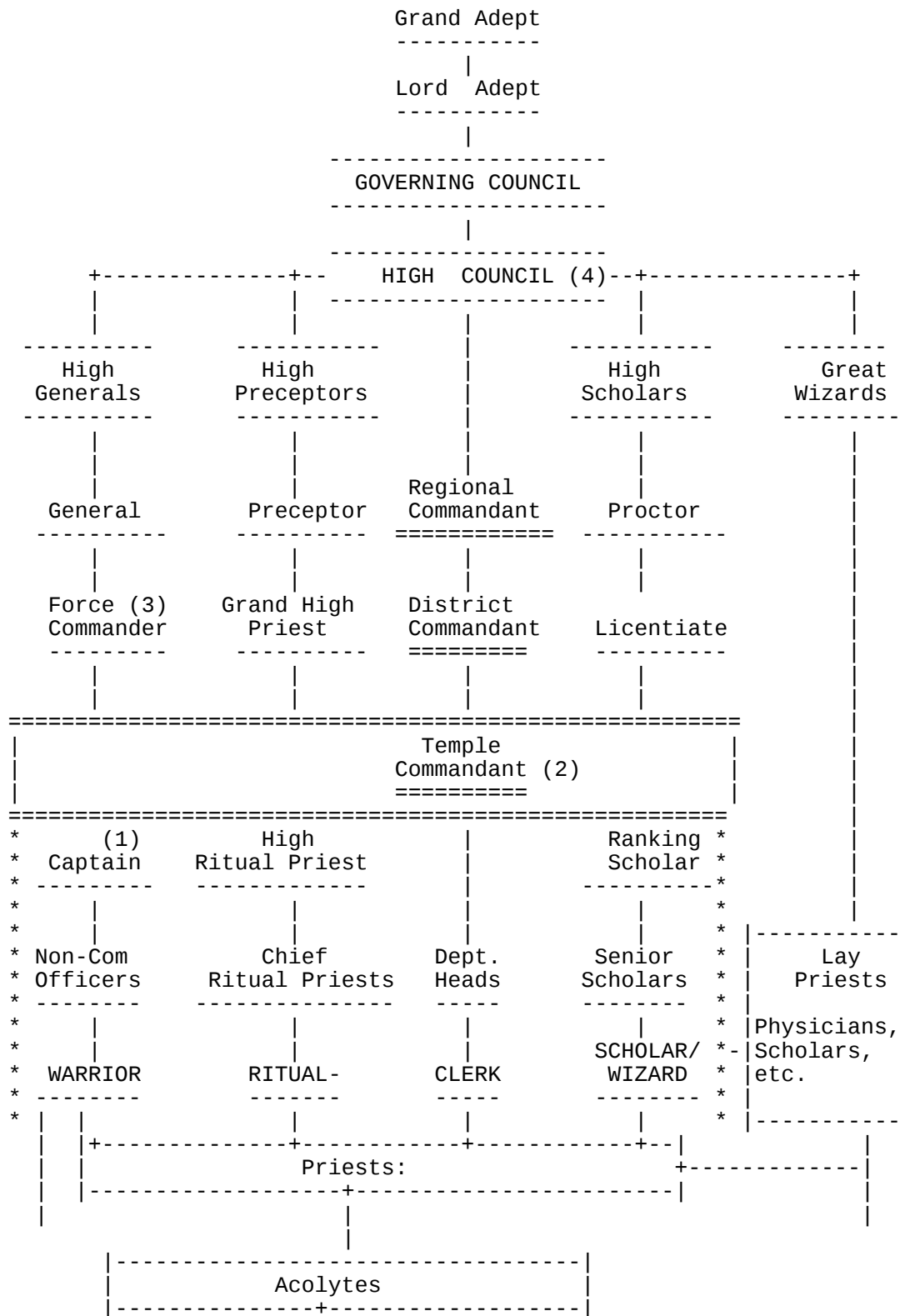
Lord Dúrugen hiNáshomai, High Princeps of Thúmis in Béy Su, of the Clan of the Red Mountain, is about fifty-nine years old and is the chief proponent of the doctrine of the Imminence of the Eye. This man is not originally of high clan lineage and has worked his way to the top of his order by dogged effort (and some carefully laid intrigues). He is thin to the point of emaciation, bald, with the typical central-Tsolyáni hooked nose and sharp chin. His interests include philosophy, several of the sciences, and art, and he served on the High Council of the temple with distinction for the past five years -- and fully expected to be made Grand Adept of the temple after the recent demise of Lord Tuingáshte hiSsáronel, the previous High Princeps. Instead, the High Council of the temple split between three candidates and ended by recommending a comparative newcomer, Lord Gámalu, to the Petal Throne. More surprising, the Imperium concurred in the recommendation! This was possibly due to pressures exerted by both friends and enemies of the three likely candidates -- rather than offend any faction, the Imperium agreed with the High Council and opted for the newcomer. Lord Dúrugen is a sincere and devoted man, however, and he will do as the Imperium commands -- until he is able to do otherwise with impunity....

The oldest of the current heads of the temple of Thúmis is Lord Rírutlu hiVrázhimy, of the Standing Stone clan, who is about sixty-one years of age -- quite elderly for a Tsolyáni, where life expectancy is not too great. He is the chief advocate of the Transcendentalism of the Eye, and his followers within the hierarchy are very numerous. Lord Rírutlu is one of the senior administrative priests of the temple, and much of the bureaucracy and administrative network are in his hands. He is a thickset, smallish man, of no great strength but yet possessing considerable vitality. In his youth he took a great interest in women, and at one time he had some twelve wives and many concubines. His last wife died about a year or so ago, however, and he is now alone, totally devoted to his administration -- and to a brood of grandchildren who are mostly teenagers now. He is interested in Daquí, the Tsolyáni game of draughts, and in poetry, although in his youth he was quite athletic and a powerful wrestler. His main objective now seems to be the establishment of a solidly effective administration and a central network for tithe collections. He is thus partially in agreement with Lord Gámallu but can never consent to the building of a legion for the temple, holding that this is a great drain upon the temple resources -- even if Lord Gámallu supports this legion from the revenues of his own personal fief of Páya Gupá, this takes away tithes and donations which might otherwise have gone to the temple. He is thus firmly opposed to a military role for the temple.

Of the younger members of the hierarchy, one may mention the priestess Lady Sitláya hiHehéssha, of the Grey Cloak clan of Páya Gupá. She is a scholar priestess, approximately twenty-three years of age, and belongs to the family of the hereditary governors of Páya Gupá, a post now held by her clan brother, Lord Díyo Sáno hiHehéssha. Lady Sitláya is already and accomplished sorceress, a scholar of ancient and modern tongues and an astrologer of note. She is also quite athletic and has made journeys back into the Pé Chói hinterlands to search for ancient relics reported to be there. Physically, she is tall and slender almost to the point of thinness, high cheekboned and wide-hipped, as are many of the people of the Chákas. Lady Sitláya is also hinted to be one of the leaders of the Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom, an accusation which she would no doubt hotly deny. Her life has been exemplary: she keeps only one current slave lover, has never been married (her aristocratic lineage demands someone of equal clan-status, but she has not accepted any of the possible candidates thus far), and devotes herself to her studies at the temple in Páya Gupá. Yet rumors persist that many of the young priests and priestesses who work with her at Páya Gupá and who correspond with her from Sokátis are members of the Brotherhood. This is in itself no crime and cannot be acted against, since the Brotherhood avowedly refuses to support acts of violence -- yet this young lady is worth watching.

One of the most respected scholars of the temple of Thúmis is the High Scholar Visárga Duyumachrsh, a man of about seventy-five years of age, who dwells at the temple of Thúmis in Ssa'átis in Mu'ugalavyá. As his name indicates, he is of Mu'ugalavyáni descent. His field is history, particularly that of the Bednálljan period, and his scholarship is famed throughout all of the human lands of Tékumel. He is uninterested in doctrinal disputes and has little patience for anything but his chosen field. He began as a soldier in the Mu'ugalavyáni army many years ago and took an interest in the priesthood only after his retirement at a rank equivalent to that of a colonel. He then studied history and traveled to a great many sites in several countries. His skill at identifying and using ancient artifacts is legendary, and scholars flock to his lectures in the Hall of the Four Niches in the Red Palace in Ssa'átis.

Many other priests, administrators, and officials could be listed here, but this should suffice for the present. Much of what has been said above applies to other Tsolyáni temples besides that of Thúmis, of course, and it is important to establish a general outline upon which later descriptions can be fitted.



Notes:

1. This is the highest rank in those temples which do not support legions. Such warriors are temple guards and are locally recruited,

trained and supported. There is no central command or coordination of forces.

2. In temples outside the larger urban areas the high ritual priest also serves as the temple commandant and the department heads report to him. If the ritual priest is advanced to a higher administrative post, he discontinues his ritual functions.

3. A force commander's rank is subject to considerations of location, mission, troops, personal status, etc. The ranks and route of advancement are the same as for the regular military forces.

4. Members of the High Council are often given the additional status of "Patriarchs."